Book Reviews

April 2020

Section Editors: Craig Nessan, Ralph Klein, Troy Troftgruben

Review a book!

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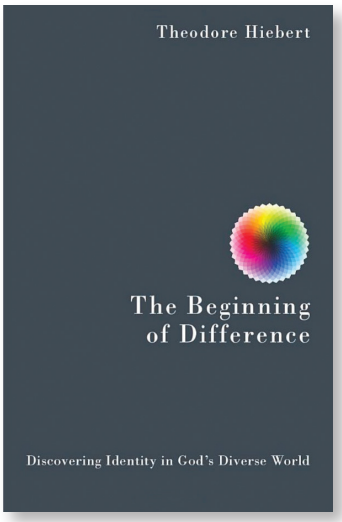


The Beginning of Difference. By Theodore Hiebert. Nashville: Abingdon, 2019. ISBN: 978-1-5018-7102-3. xxx & 150 pages. Paper. $17.99.

Hiebert, recently retired from McCormick Theological Seminary, has written an innovative interpretation of the book of Genesis that sets a new agenda for life in religious communities. He credits living with the faculty and students of McCormick for developing the insights of this book. Hiebert also translated the book of Genesis for the Common English Bible (CEB), the most important rival to the dominance of the NRSV for contemporary use in the church.

His opening chapter overturns much of the understanding of the Tower of Babel during the last two millennia. This is not a story of human pride and divine punishment, but it's about the discovery, creation, and construction of cultural identity after the flood (Gen 11:1-4). At this point God intervenes to introduce the world's different cultures by creating a mixture of many languages used by people in many different lands (Gen 11:5-9). Cultural solidarity is a good thing, but so is the reality of cultural differences in the two halves of the story. The people's desire to build a common culture is told without blame or disapproval. In traditional exegesis cultural identity is linked to rebellious pride, and cultural diversity is ascribed to God's punishment. In Hiebert's view a strong cultural identity and the reality of cultural difference are not contradictory. Hiebert follows a modified documentary hypothesis in which J is renamed the Storyteller, and the priestly writer is called the priest. E emerges as the Northern storyteller.

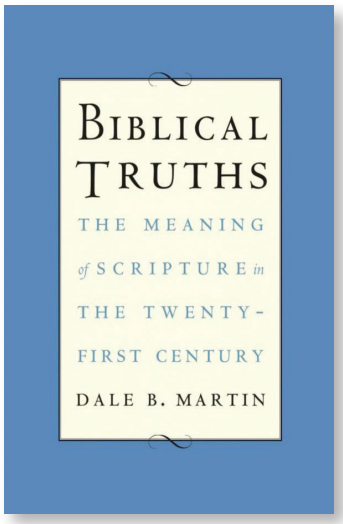
In a second chapter Hiebert replaces the idea of the Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) with the idea of the Storyteller and the priest who choose Noah as their founding ancestor and depict all the nations of the earth as linked genealogically through kinship ties (the Table of Nations in Genesis 10). The fundamental structure of the world underlying all its differences is the structure of relatedness. This is a much more inclusivist thinking.

A third chapter shows that the biblical peoples lived creatively with difference. The stories of Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael (Israelites and Ishmaelites), Jacob and Esau (Israelites and Edomites), and Joseph and his brothers (The Twelve Tribes of Israel) imagine a world in which conflict is negotiated successfully. The demeaning, exclusion, and erasure of the other is avoided, and differences flourish. This chapter is marked by fresh insights on every page.

Hiebert proposes in chapter Four that Luke's account of Pentecost is not Babylon in reverse, but the new Christian movement resembles the way that the original Babel story created the world after the flood. Pentecost happened in one place (Jerusalem), in one language (Aramaic), and in one culture (Judaism). The Holy Spirit diversified the single language of the original participants of Pentecost into the languages of all the nations under heaven. Place and language are the key markers of cultural identity in the first half of Luke's Pentecost story, and cultural difference is valued in the second half of that story. Luke recognizes ethnic identity as a cornerstone of Christian identity, but Luke also recognizes the reality and value of distinctive cultural identities in the church.

In the last pages of this book Hiebert identifies three core values in his exegesis: difference is normal; difference is always viewed within a network of relatedness; and there is a need for an imagination big enough to combine realism, generosity, and optimism about living with difference.

Ralph W. Klein
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago



Biblical Truths: The Meaning of Scripture in the Twenty-First Century. By Dale B. Martin. New Haven: Yale, 2017. ISBN: 978-0-3002-2283-8. xi & 394 pages. Cloth. $36.00.

Dale B. Martin describes his project as a "theology *with* the New Testament" (31). Martin's choice of preposition is intentional, signaling that he is not ultimately concerned with summarizing what the Bible says about a particular

topic but rather with how one doing theology uses scripture, in all its diversity, as a primary conversation partner.

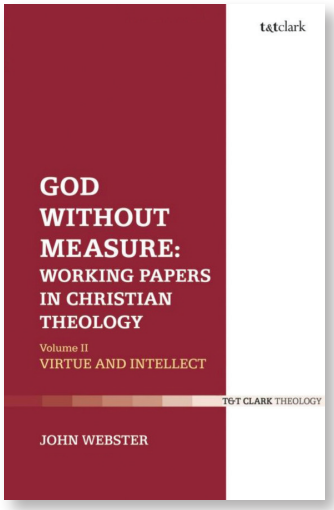
Martin's method is evident throughout the main chapters of the book. In his chapters on "Knowledge" and "Scripture," he repeatedly distinguishes types of knowing. Martin maintains that "historical knowing" or "what really happened" are insufficient for doing biblical theology. While contemplating authorial intent or what a passage may have meant in its original context may be helpful aspects of the hermeneutical conversation, they are constructions and only one part of a faithful interpretation of scripture. Rather, Martin favors a "theological knowing" that expresses truths about God, humans, and the world. This type of knowing interacts with scripture and with the experiences of Christians throughout time and place.

In his chapters on "God," "Christ," and "Spirit," Martin emphasizes that orthodox formulation of theological doctrines such as the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit were developed through interpretation of the biblical canon long after the contents of that canon were written and collected. Thus, scripture functions not as a container of theological teachings but rather as a resource for theological interpretation—and a wide-ranging, multivalent resource at that. In conversation with such resources as Greek philosophy, first-century Jewish practice and tradition, and the varied canonical resources, Martin exemplifies the "theological knowing" of which he writes in his opening chapters.

While the belief and practice of Christians both individually and collectively are important throughout the book, these aspects come most to the fore in Martin's chapters on "Humans" and "Church." What does it mean to be human and to confess faith in the church? Martin allows for more direct imitation of scripture in these chapters, while also drawing on resources from Greek philosophy, modern science, and Athenian democracy as well as from the practice and experience of living as a human and as church. These chapters lean more heavily toward ethical discernment and, particularly the chapter on humans, focus somewhat more heavily than expected on matters of sexuality.

The book ends abruptly, perhaps signaling once more that the book is not the final word of a closed conversation but one voice in an ongoing conversation within biblical theology. The book is readable but not light. It may take some time for a reader to work through, particularly if not accustomed to reading academic theology, but it will elicit excellent discussion about the authority of scripture, theological thinking, and ethical discernment for a group that wants to wrestle with these issues.

Kristin J. Wendland
Wartburg College



God without Measure: Working Papers in Christian Theology: Volume II: Virtue and Intellect. By John Webster. New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-5676-8604-6. viii & 240 pages. Paper. $39.95.

This is the second volume of "working papers" by the now-deceased theologian John Webster. Three of the eleven chapters (1, 4, and 11) have not been published previously, while the remaining eight were published previously in books and journals. Like the first volume of *God without Measure*, many of the titles of these republished essays have been slightly revised. As the subtitle of the volume suggests, two areas are covered, namely virtue (chapters 1-8) and intellect (chapters 9-11).

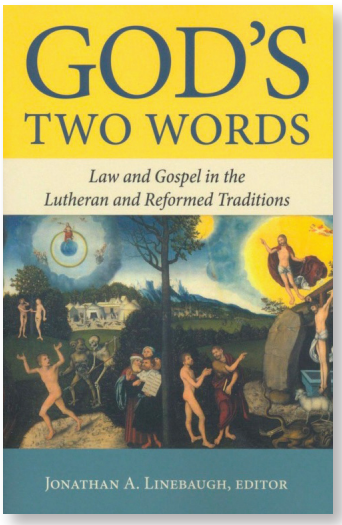
In chapter 1, Webster distinguishes this second volume from the first when he writes: "The essays assembled in the first volume of this collection treated questions concerning the divine nature and persons [whereas] … [t]he present volume considers the moral and intellectual acts of God's human creatures" (1). In characteristic Webster fashion, he is careful to note that "moral theology" is not merely relegated to such places as "theological anthropology or sanctification" but rather "is distributed across the corpus of dogmatics" (2). This broad distribution is based on his conviction that "[e]ach moment of dogmatic reflection on God and the works of God is enlarged … by moral theological reflection" (2). In a word, the principles of moral theology are to be deduced from dogmatics, while dogmatics is "enlarged" by former.

This close connection between dogmatics and moral theology is explored throughout this volume. Because moral theology, for Webster, is concerned with "the first principles of created moral nature," these essays are less about concrete "practical-theological" questions and more about the moral-theological principles that serve as "the grounds and orientation" of "the practical-ethical" (3).

A variety of "moral-theological" topics are addressed, such as creaturely dignity, sorrow, speech, and intellectual patience. One essay demonstrates well Webster's effort in this area of study—his reflection on sorrow in the Christian life (chapter 5). With the aid of Augustine and Aquinas, he argues that sorrow is "not intrinsically morbid" since, when "properly functioning," it is an "aversion" from evil and an "inclination" toward and affirmation of the good (78). Sorrow is used to turn us to the gospel, which instructs of the redemption of Christ and regeneration of the Holy Spirit, or, more specifically, "the consolation" for our sorrow (82).

One minor flaw in this collection is that Webster is careful to note in every essay the dogmatic grounding of the moral-theological topic in view. This creates a certain redundancy which could have been excised from most of the essays without detracting from the strength of his argumentation. Nevertheless, this posthumous publication of Webster's essays, like the first volume, demonstrates the clarity and depth of analysis that characterized him as a thinker. As such, these essays are essential reading for anyone wishing to think through moral theology on their way to pressing practical considerations.

Thomas Haviland-Pabst
The Grove Church
Asheville, North Carolina



God's Two Words: Law and Gospel in the Lutheran and Reformed Traditions. Edited by Jonathan A. Linebaugh. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7475-7. 253 pages. Paperback. $35.00.

These ten essays, including an introduction by the editor, consist of contributions from a two-day colloquium held in 2016 between Lutheran and Reformed theologians on the overlapping, contending, and complementary ways the distinctions between law and gospel have shaped their respective traditions and their relation with one another. Oddly, none of the participants claim involvement in or knowledge of official Lutheran-Reformed dialogues going back to the 1960s in the U.S. that culminated in the declaration of full communion among three Reformed churches and the ELCA in 1997 or the 1973 Leuenberg Agreement between Reformed, Lutheran, and United churches in Germany.

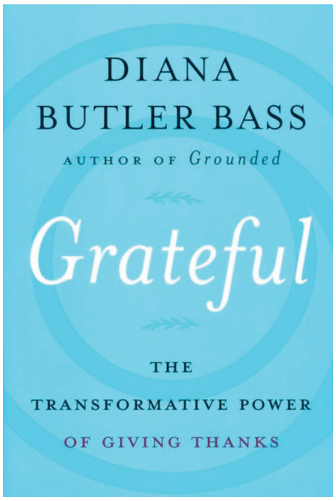
The essays offer a well-balanced consideration of the significant role that the law/gospel dynamic has played in these broad Reformation traditions. Much attention is given to assaying the relative importance of the distinction between law and gospel within and between the two traditions, including the Lutheran emphasis focusing on a "second use" of the law in its accusatory role as preparation to the preaching of the gospel as the law's goal. Overall, the Reformed representatives champion a sense of law and gospel being reconciled in various forms of covenantal theology with an emphasis on the "third" use of the law as moral guidance for Christians. Here Reformed theologian, Kelly Kapic, suggests the helpful metaphor of the law as a GPS that speaks while one is driving, "which rightly judges when you are lost and going the wrong way, but also has the capacity to point you in the right direction." "[O]n its own the law doesn't take you anywhere" but only "gives instructions" (138–139).

Steven Paulson from a Lutheran perspective asserts, to the contrary, that our ingrained human religious penchant as sinners wants to have direct, immediate contact with the "hidden, unpreached, naked God in majesty" rather than the "lowly, preached God hidden under the sign of his opposite in the cross and delivered to us through an earthly preacher." "Humans hate Christ," Paulson contends, "and so spend their time looking for ways to change the gospel into the law, especially by explaining *ad nauseam* how much we really love Christ—or could if we tried harder" (104). As Paulson quotes Luther regarding the essential "second use of the law" in condemning sinners: "A law that does not condemn is a fake and counterfeit law, like a chimera or a tragelaphus (half goat/half stag)" (the counterpart, Paulson humorously suggests, of the South Dakota "jackalope").

Most participants view the law/gospel distinction more ironically, suggesting that differing Reformed and Lutheran perspectives should be seen as complementary rather than conflicting or even church-dividing. One practical suggestion offered for future research could involve a careful audit of a representative sample of Reformed and Lutheran worship services to discern how law and gospel were evident in the public gatherings of both traditions.

Rev. John Rollefson
Retired ELCA pastor
San Luis Obispo, California

(NOTE: Rev. Rollefson served for four years on the Lutheran Reformed Coordinating Committee that oversaw the final process of full communion declared between Lutherans and Reformed in 1997.)



Grateful: The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks. By Diana Butler Bass. New York: HarperOne, 2018. ISBN 978-0-0626-5947-7. xxi & 224 pages. Cloth. $26.99.

Grateful: The Subversive Practice of Giving Thanks. By Diana Butler Bass. New York: HarperOne, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-0626-5948-4. xxi & 224 pages. Paper. $16.99.

Diana Butler Bass' book, *Grateful*, (offered in both cloth and paperback as noted above, although with a slight variation o the title) would make a great text for a congregational book group any time of the year, especially leading into frenzied seasons. Bass offers a thoughtful exploration into giving, receiving, and living with gratitude.

Beginning with an effective background on the basics of gratitude, its etymology as well as cultural history, Bass structures the book around the "me" and the "we" of gratitude, as well as the emotions and the ethics associated with it. The private and public dimensions of these twinned poles provide much to explore: "This is the gratitude gap. We may be thankful in private, but individual gratefulness does not appear to make much difference in our larger common life" (xix). Written during the first year of the Trump presidency, Bass is honest about her own struggles with despair and anger as well as attentive to the fraying social fabric that could use more than a little mending.

One problem that she identifies, and identifies with, is likened to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's exploration of "cheap grace" in a nation of individuals turned in on themselves, concerned for their "individual salvation and personal comfort" alone, "all the while allowing deep social discontent and anger to fester in public life" (xix). Bass suggests that we currently experience a sort of "cheap gratitude: the sort based in duty or demand. If someone gives you a gift, you must return the favor. You owe a debt" (xxi). Lost is any sense of connection or depth of feeling. This leaves room for resentment to grow, and despair to set in.

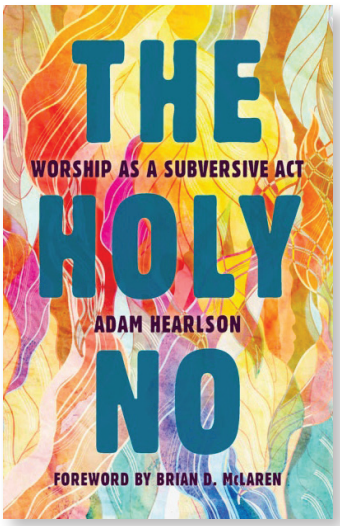
The author sketches an alternative: "I argue that gratitude is not a transaction of debt and duty. Rather, gratitude is a spiritual awareness and a social structure of gift and response" (xxv). Cultivating such an awareness and building such a social structure takes time and effort. The majority of the book is spent exploring the intersections between the personal/communal elements of gratitude with the emotions/ethics aspects of the awareness and practice.

A main goal of the book is answering this question: "How does gratitude move from feelings to a disposition of character, from an emotion to an ethic?" (54). Bass draws on biblical texts, social scientific research, public survey data, personal experience, and political stories of the zeitgeist to suggest a variety of answers.

Her reading of the Zacchaeus story in Luke 19 stands out as a new take on a story much-sung in Sunday school but little-understood for its depth of social and political commentary. "The Roman structure of gratitude collapsed when assigned roles disappeared and the conventional gifts of hospitality could not be repaid. Instead, Jesus imagined a place where oppressed and oppressors leave their 'stations' and meet as friends, where forgiveness is practiced and gratitude expresses itself not in debt payment but in passing on generous gifts to others" (159-160). Because Bass is an accomplished scholar and teacher as well as a writer who communicates in and with the public, she makes biblical texts like this as well as theological ideas like grace accessible and relevant.

Parts of *Grateful* feel somewhat repetitive; though, this is the kind of repetition that comes from a writer who works well in short vignettes and regularly speaks in public and writes for op-ed pages. Readers can effectively dip in and out of the book because it feels as if it was written in bits and pieces, for various times and places. Diana Butler Bass has become well-known for her ability to write about religion and spirituality for broad audiences while remaining grounded in her own personal and theological training in Christianity. For this, we should remain (and read) *Grateful*.

Caryn D. Riswold, Ph.D.
Wartburg College
Waverly, Iowa



The Holy No: Worship as a Subversive Act. By Adam Hearlson. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018. ISBN 978-0-8028-7385-9. 184 pages. Paper. $24.00.

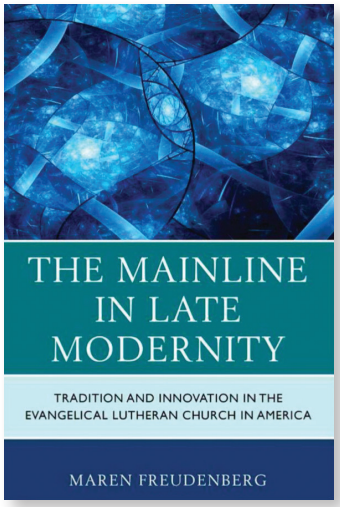
I fancy myself as something of a contrarian of the Jesus school, the one who was lullabied to sleep as an infant to the words and melody of his mother's incendiary cradle song, *Magnifcat.* The author's goal is to "curate"—a word he takes great care to explain—an eclectic collection of attitudes, resources, anecdotes, and theological perspectives judged fitting to fund the thoroughly "subversive" approach to the participatory leadership required by the church for our day.

In taking up this challenge, Hearlson introduces at length what he means by "subversion" (a principled kind of "resistance" to the world's normal ordering of things) and then discusses worship practices such as preaching, festivals, hospitality, communion, music, and art while conceding (without explaining why) how his argument could have been made stronger by including topics such as baptism and prayer, or even dance and potlucks (34–35). While the subversion of the church's worship seems to be his end in view, it becomes clear that the aim is really the reformation of the church, root and branch.

In his final chapter, the author concedes that "the faithfulness of subversion requires holding open the possibility that your way of subversion is doing more harm than good" and that a good dose of humility is required to steel yourself against the presumption that one's subversion is "automatically righteous" (167). One cannot help but wonder whether a book with the title, *The Holy No*, might not be reaching beyond the merely assertive into the realm of presumptive self-justification. A sentence such as the following sounds dangerously Arminian to Lutheran ears: "Jesus. . . promises us that we too possess power to resist and change the deathly forces of this world." So far, so good. But then he adds: "That is, if we are willing to be like the 'least of these'" (23). Willingness leads to the lurking voluntarism that is the bane of American Protestantism, especially in its liberal or radical incarnations.

Still, there is much to be learned and savored in this well-intended and needed poke at the worship routines of the mainline church. It is from the edges of church life at the boundaries of our multicultural world that we can observe new behaviors and practices springing up, often despite rather than on account of the church's best-intentioned efforts. This book is neither a catalogue for change nor a compendium of fresh ideas, yet it can serve as a catalyst for the subversion that the Gospel promises through *metanoia* in the life and liturgy of the church.

Rev. John Rollefson
Retired ELCA pastor
San Obispo, California



The Mainline in Late Modernity: Tradition and Innovation in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. By Maren Freudenberg. Lexington Books; Lanham, Maryland: Bowman and Littlefield, 2018. 978-1-4985-5584-5. 235 pages. Hardback. $81.25.

At the heart of Maren Freudenberg's book is a simple question: Are mainline American denominations "on the path to extinction" (3)? More specifically, her analyses bore in on whether the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is capable of sufficient transformation to endure in an era when the trajectory in religious life must increasingly "deliver emotionally" for would-be believers of the twenty-first century. In our time, she asserts, fewer and fewer people in North America and Europe are attracted by a traditional church that is "too hierarchically organized, too focused on clergy status and income, too opaque in communicating its religious convictions, and too reluctant to embrace experiential practices, to survive in the long run" (2).

So as not to keep the reader in suspense, Freudenberg states her conclusion in the introduction. She believes "that the ELCA is carving out for itself a unique space in the American religious landscape between confessionalism and pietism," which offers hope that it may indeed survive "and possibly even thrive" (3) as the years roll along.

Freudenberg's is a work of ecclesial sociology that includes a succinct and useful historical overview of mainline Protestantism in the American context. As a German, who is currently research associate at the Center for Religious Studies at Ruhr-Universität Bochum, she brings a degree of objectivity to the task that would be beyond most North American scholars. At the same time, her "outsider" status creates inevitable limitations in her ability to grasp all the nuances of a complex denomination that thirty years post-merger is still in search of a broadly embraced core identity.

Freudenberg approached her task as a good sociologist, supplementing a review of key historical and governing documents with personal interviews involving "grassroots" parishioners and clergy, as well as bishops and other ELCA leaders in its "expressions" beyond the congregation (that is, synods and the churchwide organization). As will be the case with any such study, there are limitations in how broadly the information-gathering net can be cast. A major one in this exercise is Freudenberg's confining her interviews to ELCA folks primarily in the upper Midwest. One can imagine readers on both coasts nearly shouting: "But that's not the ELCA as we live it out in our contexts!"

Innovative efforts to transform declining or dying congregations are noted as signs of hope for the ELCA's future. Freudenberg is convinced Lutheran theological integrity and authenticity can be preserved even as local faith communities move into more emotionally expressive patterns of worship and communal life akin to those in Pentecostal and other denominations. "Individual parishioners are more in the focus of denominational activities than ever before," she concludes, "suggesting a shift from a confessional to a pietistic church framework to a noticeable extent" (197). Many pastors, especially younger ones, appear willing to relinquish control and foster grassroots lay renewal efforts. Greater focus on personal spirituality, engagement with the Bible, prayer, and renewed interests in elements of the charismatic movement all contribute to the "valorization of the individual and the growth of the sacralized self," which Freudenberg sees as key ingredients of revitalized Christianity.

In the ELCA's larger life beyond congregations, the author assesses, "innovative leaders are modifying denominational structures to make the ELCA a more networked, collaborative, and participatory entity." Having served a good portion of my ministry in synodical and churchwide positions, this reviewer is convinced that the paring down of churchwide boards and synodical staffs and committees, combined with the move to less frequent assemblies may actually involve centralizing power in the hands of fewer and less accountable leaders. This is another instance where Freudenberg's perspective may be limited by her lack of long-term involvement in the denomination's inner workings.

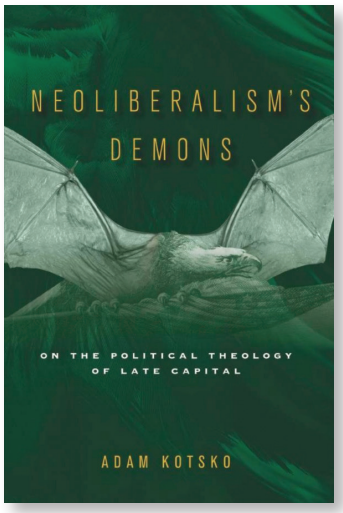
Freudenberg points to four trends she observed afoot in the largest U.S. Lutheran denomination. The first can be characterized as the failure of twenty-first century Lutheranism to communicate its theology "effectively in ways that would draw people to its churches" (71). A second trend involves efforts to raise up and equip leaders who are "less authoritative and more collaborative," capable of networking and higher levels of cooperation than their predecessors (91). Closely related is a third trend, which focuses on greater lay participation and fostering a deeper sense of community to meet the hunger for "interpersonal relationships and friendship in the congregations." And finally, suggests Freudenberg, ELCA vitality in the future will hinge on success in faith formation that leads growing numbers of individuals with minimal or no religious background into the deep wells of spirituality.

At some points, the book will prompt readers to demand of the author, "Show me the evidence." An example is her claim that a Wisconsin pastor who allows people to "work out on their own terms and their schedule what it means to connect with God" is "more liberal than most ELCA leaders in the degree of space and freedom he grants his parishioners" (138). If there exists a study that pegs ELCA clergy along a conservative-to-liberal spectrum on this score, Freudenberg fails to cite evidence for her claim.

Another puzzlement in Freudenberg's methodology is the failure to cite the names of individuals who are quoted. While that may be understandable in the case of some congregational focus groups in which conversations involved numerous individuals in free-flowing discussion, it is puzzling why she frequently cites simply "an ELCA bishop" or quotes "a seminary professor." Those people have names and it would seem appropriate to acknowledge their contributions, thereby enabling interested readers to pursue matters further with those quoted.

Despite such limitations, Freudenberg's book makes a strong contribution in the field of ecclesiastical studies and is a "must include" on any bibliography for courses in American Lutheranism or the current state and future of denominations.

Michael Cooper-White
President Emeritus of Gettysburg (now United) Lutheran Seminary, Director of Lutheran Formation at Union Theological Seminary, New York



Neoliberalism's Demons: On the Political Theology of Late Capital. By Adam Kotsko. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-5036-0712-5. viii & 165 pages. Paper. $22.95.

Adam Kotsko juxtaposes political theology and economic theory in this analysis and critique of the demons of neoliberalism, the ideology that occupies and colonizes the global system in our time. This colonization is most clearly demonstrated through the privatization of virtually all public services, turning them into occasions for heaping debt on every sector of society, for example, the young with educational debt, the middle classes with consumer debt, and all but the wealthy through the expense of health care.

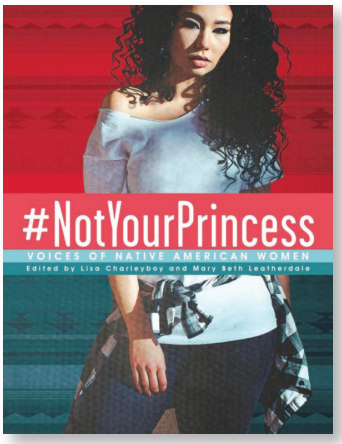
He pairs the theological problem of theodicy to neoliberalism's quest for legitimacy as the core logical problems facing each. Whereas previous eras have attempted to maintain checks and balances on economic power through legal measures enforced by nation states, Kotsko holds that this strategy has now been rendered ineffectual with the coopting of democracy by neoliberalism. He makes the case for the erasure of political controls on neoliberalism with reference to the work of Carl Schmitt, particularly the book, *Political Theology.*

Kotsko amply demonstrates how the totalizing ambitions of neoliberalism have prevailed through the argument for free markets, which translates into a notion of freedom that always lays

the blame for economic failure squarely on the shoulders of those who cannot compete and therefore are culpable for their own economic insufficiency. By manipulating "white resentment," the self-interests of middle-class and poor white people are successfully turned into the demonization of people of color and other minorities, rather than being transformed into coalition building that could have promise of accomplishing greater equity for all.

The most tendentious theological arguments by Kotsko reference a version of Christian theology that lays blame on Satan for the existence of evil, which he interprets as an effort to protect God from moral responsibility. At this point the author needs to consult more sophisticated theological arguments for theodicy, perhaps those of process theology. More satisfying are Kotsko's closing arguments that reference Bonhoeffer's reflections on a "world come of age" (139–140). Finally, we who are living at "the end of history" (Fukuyama) need to assume collective responsibility for reinventing a deeper, more complex understanding of freedom that becomes activated by advocating for social ends and the safeguarding of creation. Only through our grassroots activism might the yoke of neoliberalism be cast off and those demonized reclaimed as members of the beloved community.

Craig L. Nessan
Wartburg Theological Seminary



#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women. Edited by Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale. Toronto: Annick Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-5545-1958-3. 109 pages. Cloth. $19.95.

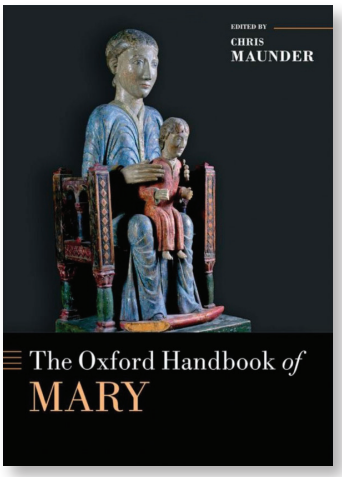
This book opens readers to the world of young indigenous women and girls. Indigenous women are among the most oppressed and endangered persons in our society. The rates of disappeared, missing, and murdered indigenous women are staggeringly high, as are those for being victims of violence and sexual assault. That is not the focus of this book, however, although these realities are apparent in the stories of many of the indigenous women highlighted in the collection. Rather, this is book about the resistance, resilience, and hope to overcome a threatened existence.

The editors combine striking artwork, photos, and texts from indigenous women, which witness to the possibility of claiming one's own self-worth and exercising one's gifts to chart a course into the future with courage and promise. The stories feature both young women rising up and women of great accomplishment. There is no concealing of the struggles, yet each voice adds new reasons to hope. The creativity of the contributors springs off each page.

Lisa Charleyboy, one of the editors, writes: "Too often I've seen, we've all seen, those headlines that send shivers down spines, spin stereotypes to soaring heights, and ultimately shame Indigenous women. Yet when I look around me, I see so many bright, talented, ambitious Indigenous women and girls, full of light, laughter, and love" (9).

This is a marvelous book to transform one's own worldview. It is of value not only for seeing indigenous women differently but for imagining a just and hopeful future for all girls and women. It is the kind of book you will want to share with the young womenand othersin your own circles.

Craig L. Nessan
Wartburg Theological Seminary



The Oxford Handbook of Mary. Edited by Chris Maunder. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. ISBN: 978-0-1987-9255-0. xx & 702 pages. Cloth. $150.00.

This is an outstanding volume compiling extensive research into foundational perspectives on Mary from the New Testament to the present. The editor has gathered contributions from a team of thirty-eight scholars into forty-two chapters to document major facets of Marian studies in ecumenical perspective.

The handbook is divided into five parts. Part 1 is on "Foundations" including focus on the Gospels, apocryphal writings, patristics, the virgin as *Theotokos*, and Islam. Part 2 attends to "Mary in the Eastern Churches" with attention to hymnody, orthodox piety, Mary as intercessor, Marian devotion, and modern Orthodox theology, among other topics. Part 3 addresses "Marian Themes in Western Christianity," including focus on hymns, Maria Regina imagery, grace, the work of redemption, patristic and medieval perspectives, and the annunciation.

Part 4 examines "Mary in the West from the Reformation" with contributions that include the English Reformation, Luther and the Lutheran Reformation, the Counter Reformation, inculturation in Mexico and India, nineteenth century perspectives, the Second Vatican Council, modernity, and Mary in film. Part 5 on "Marian Pilgrimage, Apparitions, and Miracles" has a range of chapters that cover topics such as Marian piety and gender, Mary and migrant communities, Mary in a mobile world, Mary and material culture, Marian apocalypticism, pilgrimages, and

the global network of deviant revelatory Marian movements.

Of particular interest to readers of this journal is the chapter by Beth Kreitzer (Marymount California University) on "Mary in Luther and the Lutheran Reformation." The author locates Luther in relation to late medieval piety and theological critiques thereof. Luther's own critiques were largely directed at intercessions made to Mary that misplaced the sole mediation of Christ: "Some of the worst excesses of devotion to Mary, Luther believed, could be traced to a mistranslation and misunderstanding of the angel's salutation to Mary at the Annunciation" (447). The conviction that Mary was "full of grace" transformed her into a mediator of grace. Such "critiques of the Marian cult had a dramatic effect on devotion to Mary" (446).

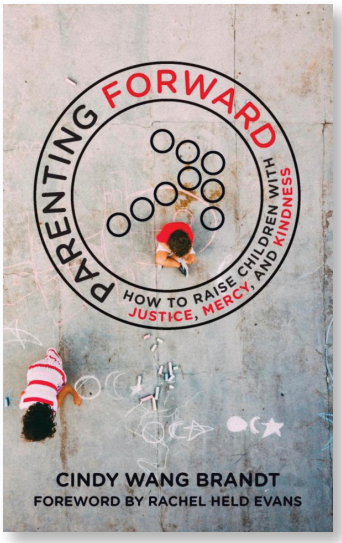
On the other side, Luther avoided an iconoclastic approach to Mary: "As an example of both the greatest faith and the deepest humility, Mary deserves both our honor and our imitation... Her faith propels her to loving action—a fine model of Luther's ethics—and to obedience, both to God's will and to earthly authorities" (448). Mary serves, according to Luther, as a "particularly good role model for women and girls" (449).

While Luther defended the confession of Mary as *Theotokos* and the doctrine of her perpetual virginity, his views on her sinlessness, the immaculate conception, and bodily assumption were less clear due to the lack of biblical attestation. In sum: "The powerful Queen of Heaven was, for Lutherans, now the faithful, humble, but fully human and sinful mother of the one who should be the true focus for all Christians, Jesus" (452). Together with the proceedings of the eighth Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue document, *The One Mediator, the Saints, and Mary*, this chapter provides useful material for Lutherans to sort out and develop a reappraisal of Mary for contemporary thought and practice.

Due to her significance in the Americas, Our Lady of Guadalupe warrants more attention in this volume. While there are a number of briefer references, for example, in the chapter on "Mary and Modern Catholic Material Culture" (641-642), a discussion of Our Lady of Guadalupe deserved either a full chapter or major chapter section in order for readers to grasp her contemporary significance amid the major demographic shifts and migration challenges at the borderlands between Central America and the U.S. For further study, see Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Virgin of Guadalupe: Theological Reflections of an Anglo-Lutheran Liturgist* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers).

This handbook assembles major studies of Mary to explore the biblical, historical, theological, ecumenical, and interfaith perspectives and will serve as a standard reference work in the next generation.

Craig L. Nessan
Wartburg Theological Seminary



Parenting Forward: How to Raise Children with Justice, Mercy, and Kindness. By Cindy Wang Brandt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7603-4. xi & 169 pages. Paper. $17.99.

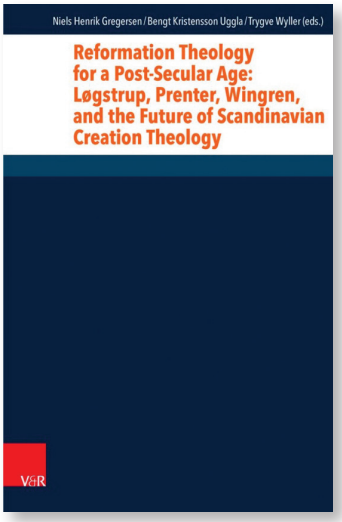
In *Parenting Forward*, Cindy Wang Brandt argues for not just raising children in faith, but to see parenting as the opportunity to continue our own growth toward the just, merciful, and kind way of Jesus. Early chapters on bodies, imagination, and spirituality form the foundation for Brandt's thesis but will likely only seem novel to those who share Brandt's childhood upbringing in the conservative Evangelical tradition. Brandt's greatest contribution comes when she turns to race, gender, and sexuality. She doesn't engage in traditional, biblical arguments for or against equality and inclusion, but grounds her understanding in curiosity and wonder—while emphasizing the gravity of these issues—providing a helpful model for parents to explore difference with children. Brandt is clear: white parents should address race with the same urgency felt by parents of color.

She also insists we should refrain from putting the onus of gender equality solely on the shoulders of our daughters. In the chapter on gender equality, Brandt treats gender as binary, but it is clear that she has an expansive understanding of gender and sexuality when she turns to inclusion.

Finally, Brandt adds to modern parenting advice—which often centers on children's emotions and needs while ignoring some of the lessons mild parent-child conflict can provide—by arguing that the family is the best place for children to learn to challenge authority.

Aided by the Brandt's personal stories—including reflections on her relationship with her transgendered sibling—this book is for Christian parents who want the act of parenting to correlate with the kind of people they are hoping to raise.

Adrianne Meier, pastor
St. Michael Lutheran Church
Unionville, Pennsylvania



Reformation Theology for a Post-Secular Age: Løgstrup, Prenter, Wingren, and the Future of Scandinavian Creation Theology. Edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, Bengt Kristensson Uggla, and Trygve Wyller. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017. ISBN: 978-3-5256-0458-8. 274 pages. Cloth. $75.00.

American Perspectives Meet Scandinavian Creation Theology. Edited by Elisabeth Gerle and Michael Schelde. Aarhus University: The Grudtvig Study Center/Uppsala: Church of Sweden Research Department, 2019. ISBN: 978-8-7971-1650-0. 87 pages. Paper. n.p.

These two volumes successfully demonstrate how a retrieval of "Scandinavian Creation Theology" can contribute to efforts for reimagining constructive (even radical!) theology in a post-secular age. The perspectives of K.E. Løgstrup, Regin Prenter, and Gustaf Wingren provide an imminent frame that coalesces with the urgent task of reclaiming creation as the theater within which the theological task must be undertaken.

Reformation Theology for a Post-Secular Age originated from a conference held at Aarhus University in 2014; this volume includes an introduction and the edited papers. The introduction provides an excellent overview of intersections with contemporary theological currents. The project includes the recovery of Luther's theology of creation, in particular his understanding of vocation as it is lived out within the estates of everyday life, civil society, and political action: "In the program of Scandinavian creation theology we find elaborated an argument for a strong and affirmative view of everyday life as the third space of society, mediating between the political government and the particular life of the church" (19). This theology interprets salvation as "regeneration" (Prenter) or more pointedly as "becoming human again" (Wingren). This follows the maxim of Grundtvig: "human first, then a Christian."

Part I of the book is devoted to three chapters on each of the three "founding figures," for whom "creation constitutes the universal horizon for any Christian theologizing regarding Christ and church, baptism and salvation" (21). Løgstrup (1905-1981) was an ethicist and philosopher of religion, in contrast to Prenter and Wingren as theologians. Løgstrup's major work, *The Ethical Demand*, examines the ethical imperatives inherent in everyday life and communication. Prenter (1907-1990) is most well-known for his book, *Spiritus Creator*, which interprets the meaning of redemption for Luther as "new creation": "redemption is not a deliverance *from* creation but *of* creation" (78). Wingren (1910-2000) is likely the most familiar to English readers due to the number of his books available in translation, including *Creation and Law*, *Gospel and Church*, and *Creation and Gospel: The New Situation in European Theology.* "Scandinavian creation theology, according to Wingren, focusses on *the need to defend the profoundly human dimension of the Christian faith*" (107). Of these three, Wingren may be the most fruitful for contemporary reflection, although these chapters articulate fertile features from the thought of each.

Part II attends to the "seminal sources" in chapters focused on Martin Luther and N.F.S. Grundtvig. Allen G. Jorgenson discusses Luther in relation to First Nations people and their experiences of immediacy to creation. His discussion of the meaning of reason for Luther and the Scandinavian theologians in relation to First Nations leads to the proposal that we extend *simul justus et peccator* to include a third simul, *et innocens*. I imagine this as an expression of a "first use of reason" that accords with the created capacity of humans to encounter and interpret creation apart from a fall into sin. The chapter on Grundtvig by A.M. Allchin, subtitled "The Earth Made in God's Image," explores the foundational significance of his thought for Scandinavian creation theology. "Grundtvig speaks of an interchange of human and divine in the life of the Church 'which on earth in time carries eternal life within itself and in heaven shall eternally carry its temporal life within it'" (143).

Part III on "contemporary concerns and challenges" demonstrates the value of Scandinavian creation theology for current topics: "speciesism" (Ole Jensen), phenomenology (Jakob Wolf), love's erotic dimension (Pia Søltoft), human rights (Elisabeth Gerle), gender (Benedicte Hammer Præstholm), ecclesiology (Trond Skard Dokka), and inter-religious hermeneutics (Jakob Wirén). Each of these chapters engages readers in considering the generativity of the project for constructive theology.

Part IV on "theological and social contexts" considers "the economic trinity and creation" (Jan-Olav Henriksen), an American perspective (Derek R. Nelson), and "the secular-religious other" (Trygve Wyller). "The Lutheran contribution is that it is not a problem to be both secular and religious" (264). Additional examples could have been named with regard to the constructive appropriation of these Scandinavian theologians in American theology. Each chapter of the book includes bibliography to guide further study.

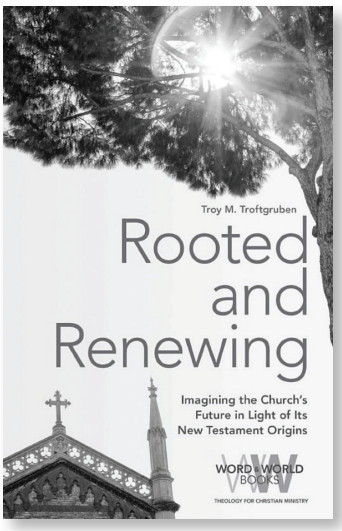
American Perspectives Meet Scandinavian Creation Theology expands the discussion generated by the publication of *Reformation Theology for a Post-Secular Age* with contributions by Catherine Keller and Marit Trelstad. Keller, in dialogue with these perspectives, explores how this theology might

contribute to "one great *con/spiratio* of creation, reconnecting spirited creatures and their creative source: with each other, and against the delusion of a salvation from the *eros* and bodies of the earth" (14). Trelstad describes the theological reorientation provided to Lutheran theology as "fresh airbreath for lifebecause they thoroughly and explicitly engage contemporary theological conversation, interdisciplinary work, and secular advances of thought in our time" (35).

The next four chapters offer responses that range from revisiting Wingren in dialogue with American theology (Bengt Kristensson Uggla), passionate mutualism for life and resistance (Elisabeth Gerle), mutuality in creation theology and the circulation of gifts (Niels Henrik Gregersen), and a theology of surprise (Trygve Wyller). In response to Keller and Trelstad, Gerle affirms creation theology as "a resource for affirmation of life and community and thus a source of resistance" (62).

Together these books incite new attention to Scandinavian creation theology as a resource for the paradigm shift necessary to restore the integrity of the earth and to scale down the damage we are doing to perpetrate this crisis, as God in Christ by the power of the Spirit inspires our "becoming human again."

Craig L. Nessan
Wartburg Theological Seminary



Rooted and Renewing: Imagining the Church's Future in Light of Its New Testament Origins. By Troy M. Troftgruben. ISBN: 978-1-5064-3976-1. Fortress Press, 2019. Paperback, 325 pages. $18.99.

This book is a gift to pastors and lay leaders who are grappling with how to live as faithful church communities in today's world. Troy Troftgruben, Associate Professor of New Testament at Wartburg Theological Seminary, demonstrates the value of current scholarship about the origins and formation of the earliest church for today's congregations. As the title suggests, the church's historic "roots" matter for fashioning the church's future in the twenty-first century.

The introduction describes continuities and discontinuities between the New Testament church and today's church, the range of primary sources for investigating the church's historic roots, and four reasons to care about these roots. The following chapters explore five specific topics: sacred spaces, comm-unity, social dynamics and leadership, core activities, and distinctive witness.

Troftgruben explores "Sacred Spaces for a Church on the Way" by citing the scant evidence in Paul's letters, Acts, and the Gospels which suggests that church gatherings occurred commonly in homes (*oikia/oikos*) and consequently shared household features and practices such as table fellowship and familial language (e.g., brothers and sisters, nursing mother, household stewards). He does note that public places—temple, synagogues, riversides—also are mentioned as gathering places for believers. Troftgruben's conclusion, however, is that the emphasis was on the gathered community as "God's sacred 'space,' wherever they happened to gather" (64)—rather than on physical buildings or specific places.

In chapter 2, the author investigates what is known about the early history and character of the church-communities in Corinth and Rome. In light of these findings, Troftgruben launches conversations on relevant topics for the church today—congregations as actually representing cross-sections of their surrounding contexts, the New Testament emphasis on the *unity* of the church in tension with our cultural value of *individualism,* and the focus on *participation* in the body of Christ rather than using the more contemporary notion of *membership.*

Chapter 3 looks at the countercultural character of early church-communities in terms of their social dynamics which were in tension with Roman societal values (honor, wealth, and patronage) as well as models of leadership—with special attention to the leadership role of women. Troftgruben closes this rich discussion by underlining "servanthood" as the New Testament alternative model of leadership and Paul's use of the "body of Christ" image for the church as undermining societal conventions regarding position and privilege.

In chapter 4, "Practicing the Things That Matter," Troftgruben argues that core practices that shaped the identity and formation of the earliest church communities were associated with what we would call worship. These identifiable practices, however, suggest contextual variation for basic activities such as sharing meals, ritual washing, forms of spiritual discourse (hymns, prayers, teaching, prophecy, speaking in tongues), and sharing and service. The church-gathering's unity was not based on the uniformity of practices but in each activity's focus on Jesus Christ. In "Unity and Diversity among Church Practices, Then and Now" (205–10), the author clarifies the root meaning of the New Testament word for church (*ekklēsia*) as a "called-out gathering" and asserts: "There is a core activity, however, that holds all others together: *gathering*" (210).

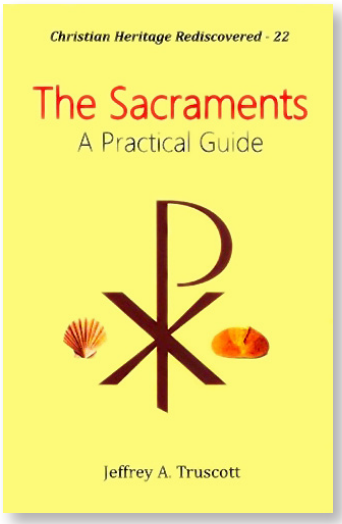
In the final chapter titled "Bearing Distinctive Witness," the writer examines the ways in which the early church communities were similar and dissimilar to three other social groups in the Roman Empire: synagogues, voluntary associations, and philosophical schools. Troftgruben shares evidence of both negative and positive responses by outsiders to Christian communities in the first three centuries, including a clarifying section on the persecution of Christians. Throughout the chapter, the author invites thoughtful engagement regarding the relevance for churches today of his findings concerning the early church's interaction with society.

As a contribution to Fortress Press's "Word & World Books—Theology for Christian Ministry" series, Troftgruben's volume offers a rich resource for pastors and lay persons to view historical and social portraits of earliest Christianity. Knowledgeable about current scholarship, the author organizes and presents the material in an accessible and lucid manner. The book's overall features encourage the reader's engagement—numerous photos and illustrations, large font print for easy reading, notes documenting the author's comprehensive research printed as "endnotes" without cluttering the basic text. An ample "select bibliography" charts a way for further reading.

Each chapter is likewise organized and presented to maximize engagement: a beginning quote, opening questions in a text box, "For Reflection" segments to raise relevant questions for consideration (e.g., "How Spaces Shape Us" on 55–56, or "Public Witness and Integrity" on 256–257), a conclusion succinctly articulating the key theme, and a final section "Bringing It Home: Ideas for Conversation and Implementation" that includes scripture to study, hymn suggestions for worship, questions for reflection, online resources for exploration, and recommendations for further reading.

This volume has been personally enriching with its update of secondary literature on Christian origins. More importantly pastors or lay leaders will want to purchase this book for use in their congregations. I have only laudatory words for the author's success in synthesizing an amazing amount of current scholarship and then juxtaposing its snapshots of the earliest church communities with a thoughtful description of the challenges faced by the church in the twenty-first century. My hope is that this book is widely read and discussed to benefit the life and witness of the church today.

James L. Bailey
Professor Emeritus
Wartburg Theological Seminary



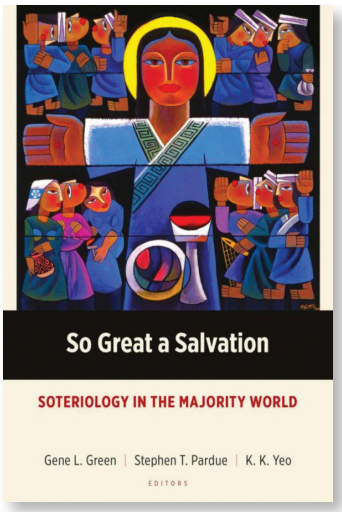
The Sacraments: A Practical Guide. By Jeffery A. Truscott. New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2016. ISBN: 978-9-3514-8077-8. xx & 476 pages. Paper. $45.00.

In *The Sacraments: A Practical Guide*, missionary pastor and insightful pastoral-liturgical theologian Jeffery Truscott provides a thoughtful historical and theological overview of sacramental practice in the various Protestant ecclesial traditions. The book's fifteen chapters each focus on a different aspect of baptism and the Lord's Supper with a beginning chapter on "the meaning of sacraments" and a concluding chapter on the "sacramentality of other rites." Other chapter themes include: "The Lord's Supper and Time," "Baptismal Meaning among Protestants," and "The Lord's Supper and Justice." This book's great gift is to provide historical analysis of sacramental praxis across the spectrum from the magisterial Protestant traditions to Pentecostalism and Revivalism.

Truscott is convinced that critical awareness of one's own sacramental tradition leads to ongoing sacramental renewal in the contemporary churches; he makes a compelling case. His commitment to pastoral liturgical reform is evidenced in his ability to bring historical sacramental theology into dialogue with contemporary ecclesial statements on sacramental practice such as *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* and the *Use of the Means of Grace*. In weaving these perspectives and documents together, Truscott articulates a uniquely Protestant but ecumenically engaged practical liturgical theology for our time. Mainline seminaries in the U.S. would benefit greatly from making this text required reading in introductory worship courses.

While this book is highly commended a few questions remain. First, Truscott insists that "the contextualization" of baptism is of great importance. I wish, however, that he would provide more examples of contextual baptismal practice and perhaps even a liturgy of baptism from a global context. Readers could learn a great deal from Truscott's own experiences of liturgical inculturation, given his extensive missionary work. A second concern relates to his discussion of the occasional rites. He asserts that marriage and ordination are states of life. This is not inaccurate, provided that they are understood as flowing forth from our one baptismal vocation. My question involves the need to address contemporary socio-cultural issues around these rites, especially the inclusion of LGBTQ persons in these liturgical actions. How might contemporary pastoral practice be renewed and contextualized to achieve further inclusion, affirmation, and acceptance in light of the Gospel? While Truscott is writing from a global perspective and may not be facing this pastoral issue in his context, it is nonetheless a contemporary justice issue that many encounter. In sum, this is an exceptional volume worthy of high praise and intentional use in seminaries, catechetical meetings, and rostered minister conferences on worship planning and renewal. Truscott's comprehensive book, *The Sacraments: A Practical Guide*, should be a reference book on every pastor's bookshelf.

Shane R. Brinegar
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago



So Great a Salvation: Soteriology in the Majority World. Edited by Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, K.K. Yeo. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7274-6. 199 pages. Paper $9.30.

The concept of "salvation" is inextricably bound to what one needs saving from, and any Christian articulation of salvation must speak directly to that need for the life-giving word of the gospel to be experienced in all its transformative power. In his introduction to the book, editor K.K. Yeo, describes his own experience this way: "Although I knew of the *need* of salvation for all, I was not clear about the meaning of 'salvation' and how the biblical God had anything to do with actualizing salvation in our world. I was puzzled by sermons I heard that declared salvation was mainly about 'saving one's soul from the eternal torment of hell'" [1]. In some ways, this puzzlement is at the heart of the whole book, as each of the diverse, interesting essays seeks to articulate salvation in a way that resonates with the experiences of people in specific times and places.

Authors from Africa, Latin America, and Asia all offer fresh takes on the concept of salvation that can helpfully de-center traditional Western European doctrines of atonement. They challenge especially the theory of penal substitution, which continues to dominate in many Protestant contexts. Yeo states it well in his introduction when he says, "Soteriology is not simply about atoning sacrifice but also about offering love. Salvation is not simply 'saved from', but also 'saved to'; not simply delivery from sin and death, but also restoration to fullness of life…. not simply wrong and sin overcome, but also love and life abundant" [6]. Those are the themes that dominate in this collection of essays.

The collection begins with an overview of traditional West-

ern soteriology by Daniel Treier, in order to provide the contrast against which the other chapters are set and to highlight some of the deficiencies in these Western theories. The chapter that immediately follows describes what salvation looks like in an African context, where salvation from spirits and powers plays an important role, as do issues of disability, material poverty, and the threat of international terrorism. A later chapter discusses salvation from the perspective of Cree theology in a Canadian context, where "colonized conversion" and the residential school system have left long shadows, and salvation must include the restoration of a healthy self-understanding and right relationship, broadly understood. The other chapters are equally insightful and helpful in their specific contextual grounding.

This is an excellent collection—interesting and easy to read—that is a necessary corrective to traditional Western soteriology to open up much-needed fresh theological reflection on what salvation can and should mean in the twenty-first century.

Kristin Johnston Largen
United Lutheran Seminary
Gettysburg & Philadelphia, Pennsylvania